

Biography for Fred M. Wilcox

Birth name

Fred McLeod Wilcox

Mini biography

Fred McLeod Wilcox was born in Tazewell, Virginia on December 22, 1906, one of six children born to James Wilcox, a Kentucky optometrist and [drugstore](#) owner, who was married six times, twice to one woman. His six children were from his first wife.

Wilcox's six siblings (his father adopted his niece after the death of his sister in 1912) included the actress Ruth Selwyn, who was married to producer-director-writer-playwright Edgar Selwyn, one of the founders of the Goldwyn Studios, and former showgirl Pansy Wilcox Schenck, who was married to Loew's Inc. President Nicholas M. Schenck, one of the pioneers of the film industry. Pansy Schenck was the mother-in-law of actor Helmut Dantine, with whom Wilcox worked on a film in India in 1962.

A graduate of the University of Kentucky, Wilcox launched his career in the motion picture industry at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, in their New York publicity department. He became an assistant to King Vidor in 1929, and worked with on the great director's masterpiece "Hallelujah" (1929). Subsequently, he worked as a director shooting screen-tests of new talent, then served an apprenticeship as an assistant director on three of his brother-in-law Edgar Selwyn's pictures. He also was an assistant- and second-unit director on two more films before moving to the short subjects unit in 1938.

After working his way up through MGM, he finally got his shot as a director in 1943, with "Lassie Come Home," a classic family film

that was enshrined on the National Film Preservation Board's National Film Registry in 1993. Wilcox also helmed the two sequels "The Courage of Lassie" (1946) and "Hills of Home" (1948). A sure-hand with child actors, he directed "The Secret Garden" (1949) with Margaret O'Brien. After directing some pictures for the B-unit, he made one more memorable film, "Forbidden Planet" (1956), a classic of the science-fiction genre.

Wilcox left MGM in 1957, to become an independent producer-director. He made only one more movie, "I Passed for White" (1960), a tale of miscegenation starring James Franciscus, which he produced, directed and co-wrote. The film is most notable today as being the first American movie for which five-time Oscar winner John Williams wrote the score.

Fred Wilcox died on September 23, 1964, in Beverley Hills, CA, survived by his son, Ron.

IMDb mini-biography by

[Jon C. Hopwood](#)

Trivia

Educated at the University of Kentucky.

Brother-in-law of Nicholas Schenck, President of MGM.

He worked with Nicholas Nayfack on [Forbidden Planet](#) (1956) and was planning to direct a big-budget MGM sequel, to be titled "Robot Planet" when Mr. Nayfack died unexpectedly in 1958.

Brother of [Mrs. Nicholas M. Schenck](#), née Pansy Wilcox.

Was the brother of actress Ruth Selwyn, who was married to producer-director-writer Edgar Selwyn.